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TAGS: MARR PARM PREL KNNP IR RS
SUBJECT: CORRECTED COPY: RUSSIA-U.S. MISSILE DEFENSE NEGOTIATIONS, OCTOBER 10, 2007, PART 2 OF 2: ASSESSING QABALA, THE IRANIAN THREAT, AND CZECH RADAR CAPABILITIES

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns: Reasons 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (S) Septel reports on the U.S. presentation of a Joint Regional Missile Defense Architecture during missile defense (MD) talks in Moscow October 10. Following is the U.S. and Russian delegations' assessment of the MD technical experts' visit to the Qabala radar on September 18, threat assessment exchange, and U.S. briefing on the physical characteristics of the X-band radar system to be deployed in the Czech Republic.

Qabala: Convergence of Views on Capabilities

¶2. (C) Following opening remarks (septel) Acting Undersecretary Rood turned to General O'Reilly of the Missile Defense Agency for a report on the September 18 visit to Qabala. O'Reilly praised the open atmosphere in which the discussions took place, and the delegation's access. The technical discussions provided a good understanding of the radar's capabilities, with Qabala's range extending to surveillance of long-range ballistic missile tests in Iran, Pakistan and Western India (with Deputy Foreign Minister Kislyak interjecting "and Israel"). The U.S. experts concluded that Qabala would reliably enjoy another 10 years of operations. Describing its significant power, large aperture, and 6,000 km range, O'Reilly agreed that Qabala would provide data on the boosting, staging, and separation phases of a missile, but underscored that the radar could not provide the resolution necessary for observation of countermeasures. O'Reilly identified the need to have a capability to observe decoys and countermeasures; to further assess Qabala's reliability, by better understanding its supply of specialized tubes (with stocks estimated at 10 years); and to view the tracking data, which would confirm the U.S. team's understanding of how the radar operated. Rood underscored that the issue of countermeasures drove the need for an X-band radar in the Czech Republic.

¶3. (C) Kislyak endorsed the positive assessment of the radar and said that its service life would depend on Russian willingness to modernize the facility. Putin had committed to allocate the resources necessary if a "pattern of understanding" emerged between Russia and the U.S. Kislyak underscored that Qabala permitted the tracking of all rocket and missile tests in its area and, as Putin suggested, could serve as a "focal point" for cooperation. Kislyak dismissed concerns over countermeasures, stating that the Russian proposal was not for interception, but for monitoring. General Buzhinskiy, MOD Chief of Directorate, International Treaty, added that the Russian delegation had answered virtually all of the questions posed by the U.S. Some technical issues went beyond the competency of the Russian

experts and a few issues involved "super secret" Russian data, which could not be provided immediately. But most of the questions had been answered quickly, openly, and frankly.

¶4. (C) Buzhinskiy agreed that the fate of Qabala's modernization depended upon a determination of what tasks it would be assigned. Historically, the facility had tracked the results of the Scud-C and Shahab-3 missile tests, and was capable of monitoring the missiles throughout their flight paths. Buzhinskiy noted that the GOR awaited an algorithm from the U.S., which the Russian experts had undertaken to fill out. Qabala was not an anti-ballistic MD system, however, and Russia did not intend it as a substitute for an ABM system in the Czech Republic. Qabala, he reiterated, was "ideologically inconsistent" with the idea of an ABM site. General O'Reilly concurred with Buzhinskiy's assessment of the technical capabilities of the Qabala radar.

Threat Assessment: Reviewing Areas of Divergence

¶5. (S) Vladimir Venevtsev of the SVR opened the third round of threat analysis, commenting that it was surprising that the U.S. and Russia relied upon the same information, but drew different conclusions regarding the danger posed by Iran. Russia did not pretend to have all the answers about the Iranian program, but used careful analysis, theories, and assumptions to color in the "blank spots" of the Iranian efforts. Russia's assessment was that the U.S. exaggerated the state of Iranian R&D, the technical level of its rocket and missile sectors, and the capabilities of its scientists. Russia took issue with the U.S. assumption that Iran was strategically committed to the development of ICBMs, with Venevtsev concluding that it was not in Iran's doctrine.

Venevtsev touched on the following areas of disagreement:

-- The level of sophistication of North Korea's ICBM technology for long range missiles was inflated, as was the track record of DPRK transfers to Iran, since the Kim Jong-Il regime had "its own policy, based on its own interests";
-- MTCR and other sanctions regimes meaningfully restricted Iran's capacity to purchase necessary technology;
-- The U.S. failed to take into account the limits on the development of the Shahab-3 system, caused by the lack of test range equipment, with Russia maintaining that the Shahab was simply the No Dong, but renamed. Venevtsev detailed other deficiencies of the Shahab-3;
-- Russia did not accept that Iran was pursuing space vehicle technology and preemptively argued that a future test launch would not constitute mastery of the technology;
-- Iran did not enjoy technical mastery of the design process, but upgraded and reverse-engineered others' systems; its engineers were insufficient in number and not highly skilled; and, consequently, Iran was still dependent upon North Korean engines. Iranian gyroscopes and accelerometers were inaccurate and Iran did not have a production line for the equipment. Venevtsev displayed a photo with visible welding joints on an Iranian missile as evidence of the unreliability of Iranian technology and concluded that neither Russia nor the U.S. had succeeded in finding evidence of a more sophisticated missile technology beyond the Scuds. A lack of construction material, verification equipment, and opportunities for flight and "stand" tests were a further limit.
-- Iran lacked solid fuel-propelled mid-range ballistic missiles, and did not possess the necessary industrial chemicals to develop them. Venevtsev was dismissive of Iran's ability to master the complex requirements to launch missiles with R-27 engines, and in an extended discussion suggested that the BM-25 might be a heavy multiple rocket launcher.

Venevtsev concluded that given the weakness of the Iranian program, the U.S. and Russia had the opportunity to monitor its development and undertake joint measures over time.

¶6. (S) Venevtsev resisted answering Rood's query on the convergences in threat assessments on Iran, stressing that the U.S. and Russian approaches to interpreting Iranian actions were fundamentally different, despite a similar set of facts. Rood disagreed with his assertion of a common fact set, pointing to the BM-25 as an example of where the U.S. disagreed with Russian assessments, on the basis of substantial data indicating Iranian possession of a missile system.

¶7. (S) In the first part of the U.S. presentation on threat assessments, Senior Intelligence Analyst Robert Kozlusky cleared up issues resulting from misunderstandings in the July presentation, including semantic differences over how to define Scud-C's and extended range Scuds; factual differences over the timing of when the Taepo Dong missile test by North Korea failed in flight; that the specifications in the Iranian marketing literature for gyroscopes and accelerometers were within MTCR criteria; and the labeling of a slide on ballistic missile-owning countries.

¶8. (S) Kozlusky then analyzed areas where the U.S. and Russia diverged in their assessment of Iran, and the implications for policy making. Kozlusky highlighted the record of Iranian success over the last 10 years in developing the Shahab-3, which demonstrated the technical proficiency of Iranian scientists and their access to technology to develop more capable systems. These developments undercut the Russian assumption that Iran would be constrained by the limits of Scud technology and the bite of sanctions regimes. Whereas the GOR saw a static system, the U.S. had evidence of a dynamic procurement process that was boosted by cooperation with North Korea. Kozlusky said that while there was agreement over the capability of the currently deployed Iranian missiles, there were inconsistencies in Russian presentations on payload and distance, and the U.S. believed Iran was further along in development of a Shahab-3M than Russia has assessed. As well, there were real divergences over what came next, with the U.S. positing the near-term development of a solid propellant MRBM, the rudimentary start of a space launch vehicle program, and the development of a BM-25 that uses R-27 technology. Rood clarified that the U.S. did not think Iran was replicating the R-27, but developing a missile based on R-27 technology.

¶9. (S) Venevtsev said that Russia had no evidence of a new North Korean missile based on R-27 technology, noted that there had been no such missile paraded in Pyongyang in September, and insisted that reverse engineering the R-27 was beyond the technical competence of the North Koreans and Iranians. Kozlusky clarified that the U.S. was not concerned about the potential development of a direct copy of the R-27 submarine launched missile, but the use of the R-27 engine on a North Korean missile and that previous Russian presentations on the impossibility of launching an R-27 missile from land did not address the use of the R-27 engine in a land-based system. The U.S. believed that technological advances were taking place outside of MTCR countries. North Korea had a proven track record of either transferring or discussing the possibility of transferring all of its missile technology to Iran.

¶10. (S) Kozlusky described how the U.S. expected the Iranian missile program to develop over the next five years, and what the U.S. believed the Russians would expect. The U.S. believed the Iranians would be able to execute a rudimentary space launch; and would develop engine technology based on nitrogen-tetroxide/UDMH, if not a flight test itself. The Russians, the U.S. believed, would expect to see continuing flight tests of a modified Shahab-3 missile and nothing new. By 2015, Kozlusky reported, the U.S. believed Iran would be able to conduct a flight test of an ICBM vehicle if Iran made

a decision to develop one. Iran has demonstrated technology that would improve the Taepo Dong-type missile. The U.S. understands Russia believes that while Iran could design a 4,000-km-range missile using IRFNATh/kerosene technologies, Russia believes MTCR controls would prevent actual development. The U.S. did not believe MTCR restrictions would stand in Iran's way. He noted that, despite such restrictions, Iran had obtained access to better technology, including in propulsion and guidance systems.

¶11. (S) In response to Rood's question about what types of indicators Russia expected to see if Iran was progressing to longer-range missiles, Venevtsev responded they would expect to see success in designing and testing a solid propellant engine; a new assembly system for the entire missile system; new test and flight test equipment; and successful development of the stage-separating mechanism; and a flight test. Venevtsev claimed that the U.S. belief that Russia's threat assessment was based only on an analysis of the shortcomings of the Iranian missile system was wrong. He remarked that the U.S. presentation had included many words such as "believe," "assume," etc.

Czech Radar Horizon Capabilities: Cannot See Russian Nukes

¶12. (S) General O'Reilly briefed on the capabilities of the Czech radar. He noted that it was an X-Band radar which could only see in a straight line, not over the horizon; its range was approximately 2000 kilometers, its beam size was point 155 degrees; and it could not search and locate by itself. The key was that the Czech radar could not bend radio waves; its minimum elevation was two degrees, the same as the Qabala radar. Below two degrees, ground clutter would interfere. Thus, depending on the location of the launch, the first 245, 450 or 850 kilometers of flight could not be seen. Therefore, the radar was incapable of seeing a missile in the boost phase. By the time the radar saw the missile, it would be too late to launch an interceptor. Rood added that, given the time necessary to assess a launch and fire an interceptor once the radar saw a missile, it would be too late to intercept a missile in midcourse either. In response to Kislyak's question whether space interceptors could be used in the boost phase, Rood responded that the Administration had only requested $10 million from Congress in this year's budget and that Committees had so far not funded this small amount. Even with upgrades to the radar, Gen. O'Reilly continued, an X-band radar in the Czech Republic would never give the U.S. the capability to intercept Russia's ICBMs. O'Reilly said it was possible that interceptors in Great Britain would be able to catch a Russian ICBM in time, but a radar in the Czech Republic with interceptors in Poland was too close.

¶13. (S) Kislyak argued that the U.S. plan was not just to put interceptors in Poland, but elsewhere as well. Thus, if the radar could identify the missile in midcourse, then another interceptor could reach it. He asked if the U.S. was willing to commit not to build a space-based system.

¶14. (S) The two sides agreed to let the technical experts continue the discussions on the parameters of the system and the response to Russia's concerns about European-based MD deployments (discussions were held October 11).

¶15. (SBU) Acting U/S Rood has cleared this cable.
Burns